

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT [C]

Baruch 5: 1 - 9

Philippians 1: 3 – 6, 8 – 11

Luke 3: 1 – 6

At the end of Luke's Gospel, we read of the two disciples who encounter Jesus as they travel, downcast, to Emmaus: "Didn't our hearts burn within us [they say] as he talked with us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?" [Lk. 24: 32](#)

This Advent, the Lord invites us to travel with Him to the stable in Bethlehem; there to find Him enfolded by the wood of the manger.

Later, other wood will receive His broken and bruised body for Crucifixion.

The Advent journey is, traditionally a penitential one; but the word Luke uses in the Gospel is not penance, but repentance.

John the Baptist, he says: "Went into all the country preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins." [Lk. 3: 3](#)

To repent is not the same as doing penance.

When we repent, it's because we've hear the Lord's voice calling us to turn from our old ways; we turn to Him, and see the face of the Father's mercy; to ask Him to walk beside us in a new direction – as He did with the Emmaus disciples.

Repentance, then, is seeing things in a completely different way.

It's like being locked in a pitch-black room; then someone turns the key, the door is flung open, and the light turned on.

That 'Someone' is Jesus.... when He enters the room of your heart, the way you thought the room was in your mind in the pitch-black, becomes completely different to its reality with His light streaming in.

It turns our perception of things around to face a radically different direction: that's what repentance is.

The Holy Spirit shows us that how we've been living up until now is completely out of balance with our being a Christian.

We've been in the dark with the light out, making do; just getting by.

And the Spirit of the Lord will produce within us those gifts and fruits, which recreate us into: "God's work of art, created in Christ Jesus to live the good life as from the beginning he had meant us to live it." [Eph. 2: 10](#)

In the first reading, the Lord asks us to: "Take off your [clothes] of sorrow and distress, put on the beauty of the glory of God for ever, wrap the cloak of the integrity of God around you, put the diadem of the Eternal on your head." [Bar. 5: 1 - 2](#)

In other words, Christians are called to be joyful people because we know the Lord Jesus as our friend – the Faithful One.

In the commercial, secular world, Christmas started in July: it's very tempting for me to get very holier than thou, and start lamenting the secularisation of Christmas.

But, I sometimes think we don't understand the 'real' Christmas spirit any more than M&S and Debenhams do.

We've, somehow, lost the joy that knowing Jesus gives us because we've locked it away in that pitch-black room, which is our heart.

The present Jesus gives us lasts eternally; it becomes deep within us: "A spring of water welling up to eternal life." [Jn. 4: 14](#)

To be joyful is to know that there is sadness, pain, and suffering in the world; and that our lives are not untouched by it.

For: “The joys and the hopes, the griefs and anxieties of [people today], especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.” Vatican II: GS; 1

Just as Jesus did when He: “Became a human being and made his home among us.” Jn. 1: 14

Lived as one of us to absorb all of the world’s suffering – and our suffering and pain too – into Himself so as to neuter it on the Cross.

This is the source of our joy, and the ‘real’ spirit of Christmas

I’m sure we’ve all got our Christmas list prepared for Santa, and for many people that’s enough to satisfy them – or so they think.

But after they’ve opened their presents, had lunch, and then woken up, having fallen asleep in front of the ‘Telly’ listening to the Queen’s Speech; then, in their heart of hearts, they know it doesn’t satisfy.

May we all be filled with joy because we love, and are loved, by Jesus: let’s share that best of presents with those who don’t have it.